

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on the Judiciary

Washington, DC 20515-6216

One Hundred Eleventh Congress

March 17, 2009

Mr. Thomas J. Donohue,
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
1615 H St NW
Washington DC 20062-2000

Dear Mr. Donohue,

We write regarding the Chamber's opposition to the federal government's E-Verify program. Such opposition is in conflict with the Chamber's stated desire to help businesses and American workers.

The Chamber's State of American Business 2009 report, released in January, begins with the statement, "These are difficult and troubling times for millions of American workers, families, and businesses." The report adds, "We must also take the necessary steps so that our businesses can keep people employed and continue to provide the best possible level of benefits to American workers."

The Chamber's opposition to the E-Verify program is surprising given the Chamber's laudable interest in protecting the jobs of American workers, which E-Verify is designed to do. American jobs continue to disappear at a staggering rate, and 11.6 million Americans are now out of work. At the same time, according to the most recent estimates from the Pew Hispanic Center, seven million jobs are held by illegal immigrants.

Immigration by illegal immigrants and other less educated aliens has had a serious, depressing effect on the standard of living of low-skilled American workers. The U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, chaired by the late civil rights pioneer Barbara Jordan, found that "immigration of unskilled immigrants comes at a cost to unskilled U.S. workers." The Center for Immigration Studies has estimated that such immigration has reduced the wage of the average native-born worker in a low-skilled occupation by 12 percent, or almost \$2,000, annually.

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In addition, Harvard economist George Borjas has estimated that immigration in recent decades has reduced the wages of native-born workers without a high school degree by 8.2%. Even Alexander Aleinkoff – Clinton Administration INS official and Obama Administration DHS transition official – calls it a “myth” that “there is little or no competition between undocumented workers and American workers.” These vulnerable American workers have been especially hard hit by the ongoing recession. In December, the unemployment rate for Americans without a high school degree reached 11.7%.

For the last decade, E-Verify has provided American employers who want to do the right thing with an effective tool to ensure that they are hiring a legal workforce – the ability to verify the Social Security numbers provided by newly hired employees. E-Verify is not a burden to employers. In fact, a study of the program found that “[m]ost employers found [it] to be an effective and reliable tool for employment verification” and 96% did not believe that it overburdened their staffs.

Regarding the effectiveness of E-Verify, persons eligible to work receive immediate confirmation 99.6% of the time. That’s a success rate any company in America would be happy to have. It has been specifically alleged that the Social Security Administration’s Inspector General has found the agency’s database to be inaccurate. However, the Inspector General actually stated that “we applaud the Agency on the accuracy of the data we tested.”

If the Chamber supports American workers, it should support E-Verify and other programs that help ensure American jobs are reserved for a legal workforce.

We look forward to working with you to protect American jobs for legal workers.

Sincerely,

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Steve King

Ken Calvert

Eric Lipton

Sam Kingdon

Howard Coble

Kent Stanks

Brian P. Sullivan

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Patricia M. Brown

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